

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of the claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method of joining an end of a pair of zipper profiles, the method comprising:

bringing the zipper profiles into engagement with each other at least over an end portion at which the profiles are to be joined;

introducing a heated probe into the engaged end portions of the zipper profiles in order to form a recess in the zipper profile material in the region of the probe;

withdrawing the probe; and

after the step of withdrawing the probe, applying external pressure to the end portion of the zipper.

2. (currently amended) A method according to claim 1, in which, during the step of applying external pressure, the pressure is applied in the absence of external heat.

3. (currently amended) A method according to claim 2, in which, during the step of applying external pressure, the pressure is applied as the sole external means of joining the profile end portions.

4. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1, in which the probe is introduced into the profile end portions in a direction substantially longitudinally of the profile lengths.
5. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1, in which the recess is formed at least partially by vaporisation of the zipper profile material.
6. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1, carried out simultaneously on both ends of the zipper profiles.
7. (currently amended) An apparatus for joining the ends of a pair of zipper profiles, the apparatus comprising a means for receiving a pair of zipper profile lengths in engagement with each other ~~[[over]]~~ at least over an end portion at which the profiles are to be joined, a probe which is movable between a first position in which, in use, it is clear of the engaged profile lengths and a second position in which it has penetrated into the material of the end portions, means for heating the probe, and means for applying external pressure to the zipper profile end portions when the probe is in its ~~second~~ first position.
8. (original) An apparatus according to claim 7, in which the probe is movable between its first and second positions in a direction substantially longitudinally of the profiles.

9. (currently amended) An apparatus according to claim 7, in which the heating means comprises ~~[[and]]~~ an electrical heating element within a rear portion of the probe.

10. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 7, including a further said probe, heating means and external pressure means at the opposite end of the receiving means.

Claims 11 and 12 – (canceled)